

Welcome New PADI Retailers and Resorts

Congratulations to the 124 new PADI Dive Centers and Resorts joining the PADI family during the first quarter of 2011. Please visit the PADI Pros' Site for a complete list of new members.

BY JO WALTERS, MARKETING CONSULTANT, PADI AMERICAS

Enter the Diver's Lair

How one man's date with destiny took him full circle to become a PADI Dive Center owner.

Located in the city of Valparaiso, Indiana, USA, Diver's Lair was originally called The Scuba Tank. New owner Les Corkill knew it well in those days, because he earned his PADI Open Water Scuba Instructor rating in that very same spot in 1995. After the business went through a series of partnerships, the owners wanted to retire and Corkill was ready to jump in. "The timing was right; the previous owners were ready to retire and I was open to a major career change. I wanted to pursue my passion. The passing away of friends and family members reminded me that time was slipping by and that 'later' might be too late."

The first thing Corkill did was mod-

ernize the store. "We felt this was the best way to distinguish ourselves from the competition." The retail space now sports two large flat-screen televisions, so the first thing people see when they walk in the door is video of people diving.

Corkill also repainted the store in bright Caribbean colors and commissioned Bridget Muntzing, a successful local teenage artist, to paint a large mural in the training room.

Corkill places great value on his ties



to the Valparaiso community. "I spent a total of 20 years as a salesperson, working for various large banks and traveling most of the time. And while I value the friendships I made during those years, I am delighted that I now have the opportunity to connect with my community – the people here at home."

Corkill reinforces those community ties by reaching out to the various organizations with dive training programs. In fact, he's tied in to the career development programs at two local steel mills, works with local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops and conducts diver training programs at four nearby high schools.

Never one to miss out on a great demographic, Corkill teaches courses at the upscale Sand Creek Country Club and has forged a relationship with the existing Valparaiso Dive Club. He promotes the club at Diver's Lair and attends its meetings and events. This gives him the opportunity to present new products and services to the club members.

In the dive center, the second television is dedicated to product demonstrations. "I like to have plenty of product for people to touch, feel and try on. For example, I usually carry two or three brands of BCDs and stock a wide selection of sizes. The video comes in handy if someone falls far outside the normal size range – although they can't try it on, they can see how it will fit on video."

But by far, his favorite innovation is the introduction of EVE 5 Software. "Yes, there has been a steep learning curve," says Corkill. "But it's the intricacy of the program that makes it so powerful. Besides, I've been attending the EVE User's Group web and teleconferences and I recently completed the EVE Business of Diving Webcast, all of which make the program easier to use and understand."

All in all, Corkill seems quite satisfied with his life as a PADI Dive Center owner. "I like being around people who dive or aspire to dive. Experiencing the underwater world completes their vision of a full life. It's my job to help them safely achieve their goals and have fun trying. There is nothing more satisfying!" It seems that being a dive center owner completes his vision of a full life, too.

